

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF A NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT

REF: ANKARA 1616 (NOTAL)

JQM AE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHETHER A CENTER-RIGHT NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT HEADED BY SULEYMAN DEMIREL WILL SUCCEED IN COMING TO POWER. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ACCESSION OF SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD BRING CERTAIN DEFINITE LIABILITIES WITH IT. THESE ARE:

A. FIRST AND FOREMOST, AFTER SIX MONTHS OF GOVERNMENT CRISIS, TURKEY WOULD AGAIN HAVE A GOVERNMENT DEPENDENT ON ERBAKAN AND HIS NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY. ECEVIT FOUND HIS COALITION WITH THE SAME PARTY INTOLERABLE AND UNWORKABLE--
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SO MUCH SO THAT HE BROKE UP THE GOVERNMENT ON THAT ISSUE.

(ECEVIT IS, OF COURSE, BLAMED BY HIS OPPONENTS FOR RESIGNING IN ORDER TO SEEK NEW ELECTIONS SO AS TO CAPITALIZE ON HIS CYPRUS POPULARITY, WHICH PROBABLY WAS AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR IN HIS DECISION). AT ALL EVENTS, IT DOES NOT BODE WELL THAT THE ATTEMPTED SOLUTION TO THE LENGTHY GOVERNMENT CRISIS INCLUDES A PARTY WHOSE WELL-KNOWN UNCOOPERATIVENESS HELPED PRODUCE THE CRISIS.

B. THIS WEAKNESS IS COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO DEPEND ON ALPASLAN TURKES AND HIS NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY, A GROUP TO THE RIGHT EVEN OF ERBAKAN. THESE TWO EXTREMIST PARTIES TOGETHER (WHO WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT OVER A SERIOUS DISAGREEMENT) COULD BE EXPECTED TO HAVE A DIVISIVE AND DESTABILIZING EFFECT ON ANY GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THEY PARTICIPATE. FURTHERMORE, THEY ARE HARDLINERS ON THE CYPRUS ISSUE AND WOULD WORK TO MAKE ANY GOVERNMENT TAKE AN UNCOMPROMISING STAND ON THAT ISSUE.

C. A CENTER-RIGHT GOVERNMENT OF THIS KIND WOULD HAVE NONE OF THE RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON THE REBEL LEFT THAT ECEVIT COULD BRING TO BEAR. WE WOULD THEREFORE EXPECT DEMIREL TO HAVE DIFFICULTIES IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER, ALTHOUGH HOPEFULLY NOT AS MUCH AS IN THE PERIOD JUST BEFORE THE MILITARY REMOVED HIM FROM OFFICE IN 1971.

D. SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD BY DEFINITION HAVE ECEVIT IN OPPOSITION, AND IN THAT ROLE ECEVIT COULD TURN OUT TO BE MUCH LESS HELPFUL TO U.S. INTERESTS THAN HE WAS WHILE IN OFFICE.

E. SUCCESS IN FORMING THIS GOVERNMENT WOULD POSTPONE A MUCH NEEDED ELECTION, AN ELECTION WHICH IS PROBABLY AN ESSENTIAL PRECONDITION OF A MORE STABLE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT A NEW ELECTION WOULD END THE CURRENT INDECISIVE BALANCE OF STRENGTH AMONG THE PARTIES BUT AT LEAST IT OFFERS THAT PROSPECT. (AN ADVANTAGE TO DELAYED ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, IS NOTED BELOW.)

F. INDICATIONS SO FAR ARE THAT THE PROPOSED COALITION, IF IT SUCCEEDS, WILL PROBABLY HAVE LESS THAN A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY (OR AT MOST ONLY A SLIGHT MAJORITY) AND

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WOULD THUS BE A WEAK GOVERNMENT EVEN IF IT DID NOT HAVE THE ERBAKAN-TURKES PROBLEM.

G. A MILITARY INTERVENTION COULD BE TRIGGERED BY MILITARY RESENTMENT OF THE ROLES OF ERBAKAN AND TURKES IN THE GOVERNMENT. IT COULD ALSO BE PRECIPITATED BY A DRAMATIC RISE IN CIVIL UNREST, OR BY A COLLAPSE OF THIS CURRENT EFFORT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT FOLLOWED BY ITS PROPONENTS' EFFORTS TO BLOCK FORMATION OF A

GOVERNMENT BY OTHER PARTIES, I.E., ECEVIT'S RPP AND/OR
BOZBEYLI'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

2. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS OF A DEMIREL-LED
NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED:

A. DEMIREL HIMSELF IS AN EXPERIENCED, MODERATE, AND
REASONABLY FLEXIBLE LEADER WHO HAS LONG ACCEPTED AND IN FACT
SUPPORTED THE NEED FOR A STRONG US-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP.
(ON THE OTHER HAND, DEMIREL WHILE PRIME MINISTER BETWEEN
1965 AND 1971 WAS INEFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING A DETERIORATION OF
THAT RELATIONSHIP.)

B. ALL THE PERSONS WE HAVE HEARD MENTIONED AS PROSPECTIVE
FOREIGN MINISTER CANDIDATES ARE INTELLIGENT, REASONABLE AND
RESPECTED FIGURES.

C. FINALLY, A DEMIREL GOVERNMENT -- IF IT HAD A REAL
PROSPECT OF STAYING IN OFFICE FOR SOME TIME -- WOULD HAVE THE
EFFECT OF POSTPONING ELECTIONS. TAKING A PAROCHIAL VIEW OF U.S.
INTERESTS, THIS POSTPONEMENT WOULD BE IN ONE SENSE AT LEAST TO
OUR ADVANTAGE BECAUSE ANY ELECTION IN THE NEAR FUTURE IS LIKELY
TO LEAD TO PUBLIC COMMITMENTS BY THE PARTIES WHICH WOULD BE
ADVERSE TO OUR INTERESTS. THE PARTIES COULD BE EXPECTED TO VIE
WITH EACH OTHER IN MAKEING PLEDGES OF RETALIATION IN CASE THE AID
CUTOFF IS NOT REPEAT NOT ENDED AND IN MAKING CLAIMS OF
INFLEXIBILITY WITH RESPECT TO CYPURS.

3. ALTHOUGH THE LOGIC OF THE FOREGOING BALANCE SHEET CLEARLY
SUGGESTS THAT THE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF A NATIONALIST FRONT
GOVERNMENT OUTWEIGH THE POSITIVE ASPECTS, LOGIC HERE AS
ELSEWHERE DOES NOT ALWAYS PREVAIL. DEMIREL IS A CAGEY AND
EXPERIENCED LEADER, AND HE IS SURELY NOT UNMINDFUL OF THE
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PROBLEMS MENTIONED ABOVE. IT MAY BE THEREFORE THAT IN FORMING
A GOVERNMENT HE CAN WORK OUT SOME PREARRANGED UNDERSTANDINGS
WITH HIS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNERS WHICH WILL MITIGATE THESE
POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES. THESE DIFFICULTIES ARE DEEPLY ROOTED,
HOWEVER, AND IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR US NOT TO HAVE THEM CLEARLY
IN VIEW.

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